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AUTHOR Rodriguez, Ana Maria
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ABSTRACT

Recent research findings that have potential application or are already contributing to the refinement of educational practice in bilingual education include developments in language research, teacher effectiveness research, and ethnography. In language research, these contributions include work on the need for and types of language proficiency, conditions for skill development, home language use, and other influential factors. Important research on teacher effectiveness has focused on successful teacher behaviors and strategies, learning time, and teacher use of cultural information. Ethnographic research has brought deliberate attention to the articulation of home and school culture, emphasizing both curriculum design suited to student development and abilities, and the mix of language of instruction with subject matter. And while the research relevant to bilingual education is broad and informative, bilingual educators have managed to incorporate a variety of approaches for use with diverse student populations, avoiding the rigid standardization that can make for curricular irrelevance. (MSE)

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APPLICATIONS OF CURRENT RESEARCH FINDINGS TO BILINGUAL EDUCATION PRACTICE

by

ANA MARIA RODRIGUEZ, Ed.D.

DEPARTMENT OF POLICY STUDIES IN

LANGUAGE AND CROSS-CULTURAL EDUCATION

SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

In this short paper, I will focus on the application of research findings to the refinement of educational practice in bilingual education. While this cannot be an exhaustive review of all the latest findings which have implications for the academic success of the language minority student, I have chosen to highlight selected findings from various research approaches which have influenced bilingual education in a somewhat chronological sequence. Specifically, I have chosen particular studies to mention because their findings are currently influencing bilingual education practice in significant ways.

LANGUAGE RESEARCH

Let us begin with current language research which has led bilingual education investigation both in time and quantity. There are a wealth of findings which inform our approach to language development. For example,

(1) From Cummins (1979b), Lambert (1978), Kangas and Toukomaa (1976) and others we know that language minority students must develop high levels of language proficiency in both L_1 and L_2 in order to achieve academically.

(2) From Cummins (1980, 1981), Burt and Dulay (1978), Genesee (1979) and others we know that language proficiency corsists of two types of development (a) Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills defined as those aspects of language normally acquired through day to day interaction and (b) Cognitive/ Academic Language Proficiency defined as those aspects of language that are associated with cognitive development and literacy and are learned through formal instruction.

(3) We also know from Cummins (1979a, 1979b, 1980, 1981), Taft and Bodi (1980), Tucher (1975), and others that for language minority students the development of Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency or (CALP) in L_1 forms the foundation for both the development of CALP in L_2 and the student's normal academic progress in school.

(4) From Krashen (1976, 1978, 1981), Lagarreta (1979), Saville-Troike (1978), Terrell (1979) and others we know that language minority students learn Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills in L_2 when provided with sufficient comprehensible input under positive learning conditions.

(5) Researchers such as Cooley (1979), Cummins (1979a, 1981), Laosa (1975), Ramirez and Politzer (1975) have repeatedly informed us that the amount and quality of primary language use in the home is positively associated with successful language learning and with school readiness.

(6) We also know from Fishman (1971), Hernandez-Chavez et al. (1978), Labov (1978), and others that language proficiency is also influenced by such factors as societal domain, language variety, speech situation, demands of the task and the relationship between the speakers.

These are some of the major principles founded in research which are heavily influencing language development practice currently in the southwestern United States and more particularly in California. Through the leadership of the Department of Education's Office of Bilingual/Bicultural Education, the large majority of school districts in the state are implementing bilingual curriculum and instruction built upon this theoretical framework. There are myriad other such principles, based in language research which offer our practice valuable insight.

TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS RESEARCH

If we turn to research in teacher effectiveness we have other findings which have direct application to bilingual education practice.

The Bilingual Instructional Features Study (1982), conducted by researches at the Far West Lab offers us empirically determined information which can assist us in the preparation of effective teachers for bilingual classrooms. Some of the findings generated by this teacher effectiveness study that have particular relevance for teacher trainers are the following:

(1) Competent bilingual teachers demonstrate four teaching behaviors that are characteristic of effective instruction. These teaching behaviors are: communicating directions, tasks, evaluation and new information clearly; obtaining and maintaining engagement monitoring student progress, and providing immediate feedback.

(2) Effective bilingual teachers maximize Academic Learning Time or (ALT) for greater student achievement. In other words, these teachers make certain that students are allocated sufficient time to engage in learning tasks with a high accuracy rate. In fact, Tikunoff tells us that they allocate as much as two-thirds of reading, language arts and mathematics instruction to ALT.

(3) Effective bilingual teachers use what Good and Gorows have termed active teaching behaviors and strategies to effect student achievement gains in basic skills. That is, these teachers are active in presenting concepts, providing appropriate practice and monitoring student progress. Active teaching also involves maintaining a fast pace; providing challenging levels of difficulty, and facilitating consistent success-rates among students.

Since these three instructional features are characteristic of exemplary teachers in general, these findings confirm that bilingual teachers must be good teachers first; and in addition, they also must demonstrate the following types of competencies:

(4) They must have sufficient fluency in L_1 to communicate what are the learning tasks, demands and expectations of the class and to give students appropriate feedback in their primary language.

(5) Effective bilingual teachers mediate instruction ensuring the competent participation of their language minority students and they do this in three ways: (a) by using both L_1 and L_2 for instruction, (b) by developing the students language skills in both English and Spanish, and (c) by responding to and using information from the students' cultures.

(6) While effective bilingual teachers across the country appear to use the primary language as a medium of instruction 25% of the time and L_2 the remainder of the time, they use both languages with precision, communicating clearly in both L_1 and L_2.

(7) And last, but in no way least, effective bilingual teachers respond to and use cultural information in several ways: (a) they respond to and use verbal and nonverbal cultural referents (b) they organize instructional activities that build upon what Susan Phillips has termed "participant structures" from the home culture, and (c) they recognize and honor students' cultural norms and values while teaching those of mainstream society.

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

This last point, that is, the point that effective bilingual instruction is characterized by deliberate attention to the articulation of home and school culture, brings us to the last group of research findings which I would like to mention very briefly. These select findings emanate from ethnographic research. Ethnographers have only recently focused on education settings and even more recently on bilingual education settings. This type of descriptive research offers great promise to bilingual practitioners at all levels, from primary schools to schools of education. Its promise lies in the detailed depictions ethnographers render of the inner workings of bilingual education.

As Moll has indicated, although the bilingual school ethnographies conducted by Cohen (1981); Guthrie (1982), Juarez and Associates (1980), Tikunoff (1982), and Wong-Filmore (1981), have all been conducted in diverse settings ranging from preschools to high schools and for different purposes from identifying optimal language learning situations to assessing a science and math curriculum, all such studies point to the social organization of instruction as a major determinant of effective bilingual education. The social organization or context of schooling, as we all know, is influenced by socio-cultural variables and makes cognitive, linguistic and behavioral demands of students in ways that define their opportunities to succeed academically.

A look at only a few bilingual ethnographies will illustrate this point. For example, in their report of an ethnographic study of reading instruction in L_1 and L_2 by two different teachers in an elementary bilingual

program, Moll and Diaz (1983), describe less than effective L_2 reading lessons which are organized to provide drill and practice, decoding and pronunciation, and effective L_1 reading lessons which are organized to develop comprehension, extrapolation, and synthesis. Their observations have led them to conclude that effective bilingual instruction in reading and other subjects must be organized by the teacher to create what Vygotsky and other Soviet researchers have termed a zone of proximal development. In other words, bilingual instruction must neither lag nor exceed the students cognitive development. To be most effective, instruccion should provide students with learning experiences which are in advance of their development, but maintain their interest and active participation.

Cohen and De Avila (1981), observed elementary bilingual students learning mathematics through a typical curriculum versus a curriculum designed to facilitate the development of thinking skills. Their results indicate that while direct instruction, where the teacher directs and monitors large groups of students, may be appropriate in teaching computational skills, indirect instruction, where students direct their own learning in small groups, clearly is more appropriate to conceptual development. This study gives practitioners notice that instructional approaches must be matched to the learning outcomes intended. It also indicates to practitioners a need to use approaches which give students more participation and responsibility for their own learning.

Lilly Wong-Filmore's observations in bilingual kindergarten classrooms with limited English proficient and English-speaking students informs practitioners that the way language is used and the manner in which classes are organized affects the ease with which children learn a second language. More specifically, she found that open classroom settings in which students

have minimal verbal interaction with the teacher and peers are not conducive to second language learning. Also, classrooms where there is a wide range of language abilities among learners are not conducive to language proficiency gains in L_2. Likewise, approaches where teachers translate lessons and present both versions to LEP and English speaking students are not efficient because students are said to "tune-out" half of the time.

Solutions that do appear to promote second language learning in bilingual classrooms where there are both LEP and English speakers are characterized by groupings where some subjects are taught in L_1 and others are taught in L_2, where teachers rarely mix the language of instruction, and where students interact extensively with teacher and peers. Solutions in classrooms with only a few English speakers and more LEP students are operationalized by teachers who act as the main source of the new language, and organize the class around highly structured teacher-directed activities. These instructional activities are conducted in either L_1 or L_2, and when lessons are conducted in L_2, the language used is modified by the teacher with learner abilities in mind. In summary, these sets of solutions are effective because they organize L_2 instruction according to the language ability and composition of the learners.

In closing, I would like to say that these delineations of some research findings which are assisting our refinement of educational practice has per force been very limited. There are many studies in each of the research areas which I have touched upon, whether language, teacher effectiveness, or the social organization of instruction which have informed our practice. I have included these as important exemplars of the ever growing body of information which is influencing our practice today. There is of course healthy

disagreement among bilingual researchers about the final application made of these and other findings.

But there is after all no decisive answer emanating from research findings. Nor should there be, perhaps. According to Cazden, it is our collective resistance to what she terms "curricular reductionism" that makes bilingual education practice singular in the United States. It has managed to ward-off rigid standardizations which lead to the type of irrelevance common in education today. Bilingual Education successfully maintains the use of a variety of approaches with very diverse student populations. We are to be commended, for isn't this what good education practice is all about?

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